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Report of the Peacebuilding Commission

Programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009

Financing field missions of the Peacebuilding Commission

Thirty-fourth report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions on the programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009

1. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has considered the note of the Secretary-General on financing field missions of the Peacebuilding Commission (A/62/670). During its consideration of the note, the Committee met with representatives of the Secretary-General, who provided additional information and clarification.

2. The Advisory Committee notes that in the first year of its operations, the Peacebuilding Commission agreed that field visits were an important component of its working methods. The Organizational Committee of the Commission decided that the Commission should undertake field visits to Burundi and Sierra Leone. Those visits were funded through a combination of self-financing by some members and by other earmarked contributions.

3. The Advisory Committee also notes that, in its first annual report to the General Assembly and the Security Council, the Commission indicated that, as part of its working methods, it had decided to organize field missions to the countries under consideration and, in view of their usefulness, it intended to continue undertaking such missions. The Commission also suggested that the Assembly might wish to acknowledge the importance of field missions as a tool for dialogue and interaction with country-level stakeholders, as well as to assess the peacebuilding priorities first-hand. In that context, the Commission brought to the attention of the Assembly the fact that the issue of financing such missions needed to be appropriately considered and that such consideration could include all options, taking into account the fact that the Commission was a new body (see A/62/137-S/2007/458, para. 43).

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4. The Advisory Committee further observes that, while the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009 mentioned that the Commission had decided to organize field visits, it did not include any resources for the participation of its members in such visits. As the field visits of the Commission were funded outside the regular budget during the first year of its operation and no determination was made regarding the mode of financing them, a statement of programme budget implications was not provided. **The Committee trusts that the provisions of rule 153 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, as well as procedures governing the inclusion of estimates in proposed programme budgets, will be strictly adhered to in future.**

5. The Secretary-General indicates in paragraph 6 of his note (A/62/670) that, given the potential increase in the number of countries on the agenda of the Commission in 2008 and 2009, the General Assembly may wish to consider more stable funding for field visits. The recommendations contained in paragraph 12 of his note are intended to provide for such stability.

6. In his note, the Secretary-General also indicates that it is anticipated that one field visit would be undertaken by seven members of the Commission in 2008 to each of the three countries under consideration, namely, Burundi, Guinea-Bissau and Sierra Leone. He further indicates that it is expected that a total of five missions would be undertaken by seven members of the Commission in 2009. Furthermore, certain circumstances may also warrant missions by the Chairman of a country-specific configuration to a country on the agenda of the Commission (see also PBC/2/INF/1).

7. The Advisory Committee notes that, based on experience in 2007 and the assumptions of the work programme of the Commission, as outlined in paragraphs 7 to 9 of the note by the Secretary-General, a preliminary cost estimate of $676,300 would cover travel expenses in respect of field visits by members of the Commission during the biennium 2008-2009. The Secretary-General indicates that this amount would be absorbed to the fullest extent possible under section 3, Political affairs, of the programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009 and reported in the context of the relevant performance report. The Secretary-General also indicates that future requirements related to field visits of the Commission would be considered in the context of the proposed programme budget for the relevant biennium. **The Committee recommends that the General Assembly concur with the Secretary-General's proposal contained in paragraph 12 of his note.**